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Inside Hamas' propaganda game

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As the war in Israel rages, an ongoing struggle to control the narrative of the conflict is unfolding between Hamas and the Jewish state. This propaganda battle is not novel, as it has long been observed to coexist with the kinetic action between Israel and the Palestinian armed groups, dating back to at least **2014**.

Drawing from its prior clashes with Israel, Hamas has gained vital insights on how to effectively counter Israel. Despite being at a military disadvantage in nearly every area, Hamas has developed unconventional methods to attack Israel, including a powerful propaganda system to garner global backing for its objectives.

For example, on Tuesday, Hamas employed extensive propaganda tactics as reports emerged of an alleged Israeli airstrike targeting the al-Ahli Hospital in Gaza. One of the earliest pieces of evidence demonstrating the dissemination of disinformation appeared when a member of the Hamas-operated health ministry was **quoted** by al-Jazeera – a fervent advocate of Hamas and Islamic Jihad – alleging that five hundred individuals at a hospital had been killed in an Israeli airstrike. Subsequently, this information rapidly **proliferated** across various social media platforms, including mainstream news web sites.

The news spurred the Israeli military to **deny** the accusation and declassify intelligence demonstrating that it did not strike the hospital and that it was an errant rocket fired by Islamic Jihad. Allied countries like the **United States** and **France** publicly supported Israel's assertion that it was not responsible for the blast.

Another point of significance is that rockets launched by Palestinian armed groups are unreliable and often times strike the civilian population in Gaza. Last year, video evidence **surfaced** that rockets fired by terrorist organizations were falling short and hitting civilian infrastructure.

Although the explosion at the hospital was probably caused by a misdirected rocket, and the casualties initially reported were **inflated**, the damage had already been done to Israel's image on the international stage.

Another example of Hamas propaganda emerged during the first days of the war when its spokesperson, Abu Obeida, **threatened** that Hamas would begin executing hostages if Israeli airstrikes did not cease. Since the statement, Israel has continued striking military infrastructure, and Hamas has not made any more public threats about the hostages.

Lastly, Hamas disseminated a **recording** showing a seemingly injured Israeli hostage receiving medical care. The video was an attempt to show that Hamas cared for the prisoners. Still, in reality, Hamas was trying to restore its image after much of the brutality and kidnappings by the group were published online.

Hamas has implemented various propaganda techniques throughout previous wars, **including** during times of general calm. Specific methods have effectively dispelled inaccurate information, primarily because of mainstream media's limited comprehension of the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Given the propensity of journalists to at times conduct insufficient research when reporting events during war because of the urgency to provide speedy information on social media platforms, Hamas will undoubtedly attempt to continue exploiting these vulnerabilities.

Joe Truzman is a contributor to FDD's Long War Journal.